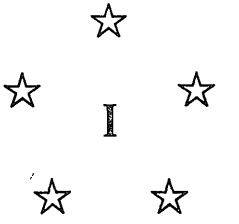

# I

# *The Marshalls of Uniontown*

*"I thought that the continual harping on the name of John Marshall was rather poor business. It was about time for someone else to swim for the family."*

AT three o'clock in the morning of September 1, 1939, General George C. Marshall, acting Chief of Staff of the United States Army, was wakened by the telephone. He needed no more special knowledge to anticipate the news he was about to receive from the War Department than millions of his fellow citizens who had been living by their radios for days as their world moved toward war. Now it had happened and the word was official. From Paris, Ambassador William Bullitt had just phoned President Roosevelt that Hitler's legions had crossed the frontiers of Poland, an aggression that France and Britain were pledged to resist. From Warsaw, Ambassador Anthony J. Drexel Biddle reported that German troops had seized Danzig, and German planes, even as he talked, were overhead.

By coincidence September 1 was the day that ended the terminal leave of the retiring Chief of Staff, General Malin Craig; the day that George Marshall was to be sworn in as his successor, dropping the "acting" from his title and succeeding to Craig's permanent and temporary ranks. In swift reaction to the news, Marshall hastened the formalities. Within a few hours of his

waking, he took the oath as permanent major general, without ceremony, in the presence of the Adjutant General. That done, he raised his hand again and swore, as Chief of Staff (and temporary four-star general), "to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, both foreign and domestic." [1]

At about the same time President Roosevelt was meeting the press. In shirt sleeves on this warm September day (the thermometer in Washington touched 86) he was grave and looked tired. There was a barrage of questions, but the big one for all America was: Could we stay out? The President dropped his head a moment and then replied that he hoped and believed we could.

When the newspapermen had departed, a little group of men in lightweight suits and straw hats entered the White House offices and was brought at once to the President. In appearance they might have been businessmen or politicians on a routine call. In fact, they were America's high military command, summoned to an urgent special meeting: Secretary of War Harry Woodring, Acting Secretary of Navy Charles Edison, Assistant Secretary of War Louis Johnson, Admiral Harold R. Stark, Chief of Naval Operations, and General Marshall. With these military advisers and later with his whole cabinet, the President arranged to put into effect measures already approved to preserve neutrality and protect the United States against possible attack.

All day news of the developing war came in over the wires in a series of hard, sharp reports. Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, who had spoken so recently of "peace in our time," summoned Parliament to meet in an extraordinary session that evening, inevitably to declare a state of war. The government was already taking preliminary steps to move three million children out of cities in the British Isles that lay open to air attack. In Paris, Premier Edouard Daladier called the French cabinet together to consider a declaration of war. Stalin's governing machinery in Moscow hastily stamped approval on the Soviet-German Pact whose signing four days before had cleared the way for the invasion of Poland. In Berlin, Hitler announced that he would solve the Polish question even if it meant matching bomb against bomb with all comers.

So it began. And the new Chief of Staff was at once plunged into the immense technical and political difficulties of preparing the United States Army to play its role in the world of war, whatever that role might turn out to be. For him personally, September 1, 1939, was the first day of almost twelve years of continuous concern with the top-level military and political problems of the war and the aftermath of war. With the single exception of Major General Henry H. Arnold, then Chief of the Air Corps,[2] Marshall was the only member of the combined American-British directorate of the war to serve in the same post from the first to the last day. Roosevelt died four months before the end. Winston Churchill took cabinet post as First Lord of the Admiralty three days after the war began in Europe, but did not become Prime Minister until eight months later and relinquished that position to Clement Attlee a few days before the final victory over Japan. Admiral Ernest J. King succeeded Admiral Stark as Chief of Naval Operations after Pearl Harbor. Admiral William D. Leahy, Chief of Staff to the President as Commander-in-Chief, and member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, did not emerge until 1942. Not one of the three British Chiefs of Staff who was in office at the beginning remained to the end.

Within a few weeks of leaving the post of Chief of Staff, Marshall at the end of 1945 was to undertake a fourteen months' mission to China in a futile effort to save our wartime ally from anarchy and Communist conquest. He returned to become Secretary of State. Forced by a serious operation to resign two years later, he enjoyed only a brief rest before becoming president of the American Red Cross, and then Secretary of Defense for a year. Not until September 1951, when he was in his seventieth year, was he permitted at last to step aside.

George Marshall arrived in the places of power almost unknown to the average American. When he left, his name, his rather homely face, some part of his wartime achievement, his plan for reconstructing Europe, the fact at least that he had been to China, were familiar to millions. He had his devoted admirers, here and in Europe, and—on the far political right—his bitter detractors. Yet in a real sense he remained unknown. His selection as Chief of Staff was widely considered a kind of fluke, and it was said then and repeated since that Roosevelt, inspired or sinis-

ter, depending on one's point of view, had reached deep down into the list of generals to raise up a man who had no obvious claim on the job. It was not so. To a remarkable degree, with a consistency rare in the careers even of the great, Marshall's abilities were marked clearly in everything he had done. He was not only outstanding but in the Army he was known all along to be outstanding. Moreover he himself worked at it with extraordinary energy and singleness and intensity of purpose. He was able and he was ambitious. When his chance came, only four generals senior to him were eligible for the post. Those in position to weigh the choice had no serious doubt that on the record of his ability and professional achievement he deserved to be chosen first.

From the beginning, almost as soon as he was conscious of self at all, Marshall had wanted to be first in everything. The intensity of that drive owed much to his father. When George Catlett Marshall, Jr., was born on that last day of 1880, George Catlett Marshall, Sr., was already at thirty-five a citizen of some note in Uniontown, Pennsylvania. He was prospering as an independent businessman, a prominent Mason, a regular churchgoer,[3] and an active member of the Democratic party. He was gregarious and easy to like, though inclined to be pompous—a solid and sufficiently lively specimen of the middle-class doers who in the last quarter of the nineteenth century were rushing to make their fortunes and complete America's extraordinary industrial revolution. He was all that—and he was also a Marshall.

Throughout his boyhood years young George* heard over and over the tales of his distinguished Virginia and Kentucky ancestry. He was not very old when inevitably he had a look for himself at the family genealogy, *The Marshall Family,* a compendium of fact and legend, misspelled names, pious recollections, epitaphs, and bad verse assembled by W. M. Paxton. The book had been published before he was five, and he was chagrined to find that it did not mention him.[4] What good after all was a book that purported to tell about your family and did not include you?

* To avoid confusion, the father of General George Marshall will arbitrarily be referred to as George Catlett, his son as George.

Nevertheless he explored the dull pages and hit upon one fascinating item (which happened also to be quite spurious). According to Paxton, one Marshall daughter of the eighteenth century married the famous pirate Blackbeard. The boy carried the book to school and lorded it over his classmates because he was descended from "a pirate who had a very bloody and cruel history and a long beard to help out." Soon the tale reached one of the fathers, who used it one day to poke fun at George Catlett and his blue blood. "Father," the General recalled, "was perfectly furious that out of all the book I had chosen Blackbeard as the only one who interested me and publicized him in town as being descended from a pirate."

Perhaps the boy enjoyed a little innocent revenge, or perhaps he was only innocent. His insistence, however, that no other part of his heritage interested him is not credible. He was a boy who loved history, and some of the liveliest tales of history concerned his own forebears. He was a boy with a strong, sensitive ego, which could hardly have been totally indifferent to its derivations. Born a Pennsylvanian, he became in maturity, by residence, by taste, and even by manner, a species of Virginian. Among the influences molding his Southern inclination it is impossible to believe that his family origins, so constantly impressed upon him from the beginning, were insignificant.

Marshall said later that genealogy "rather bored me." More obviously it embarrassed him. "My father was so keen in family interests that I was rather sensitive about it and I was embarrassed by his keenness. I thought that the continual harping on the name of John Marshall was kind of poor business. It was about time for somebody else to swim for the family." That revulsion was understandable and the response characteristic. He himself would always be reticent about his qualities but energetic in demonstrating them.[5]

In any case, John Marshall, the great Chief Justice, was only a collateral ancestor. He and Martin Marshall, George's great-grandfather, were first cousins.[6] Both were grandsons of John Marshall "of the forest," born about 1700 in Westmoreland County, Virginia. William Marshall, Martin's father, lived riotously until past the age of thirty, when he married and (in the

late seventeen-sixties) joined the Baptist Church. Focusing all his great vitality and passion on the saving of souls he became an evangelist of such vehemence that he was once confined for fear he was mad. In 1780, William and his brother, Colonel Thomas, father of the Chief Justice, a surveyor for part of that area of Virginia known as Kentucky, moved from Virginia into the new lands. William settled eventually at Eminence, in Henry County, where he continued to preach. Even in old age, after a crippling fall from his horse, he had himself propped up in the pulpit of the Fox Run church to carry on his vigorous struggle with the devil.[7]

Colonel Thomas Marshall had settled in Washington, Kentucky, and there Martin Marshall, William's son born in 1777, came as a young man to study law. He developed an affection for his uncle which he apparently never felt for his own father, and that filial attachment for the family of the Chief Justice was cherished by Martin's descendants. The Marshall house in Washington came to be regarded as the ancestral home, and young George was taken to visit it on his first trip to Kentucky.

In his early twenties, Martin moved to Augusta, a town on the Ohio River some twenty miles from Washington. The young lawyer prospered, as did Augusta, and he became one of its first landowners and one of the town's earliest trustees. He married Matilda Taliaferro, whose family too had come from Virginia, and in time built a substantial brick house which still stands near the river.[8] His son William Champe Marshall, George's grandfather, studied law with his father, and at twenty-seven launched his career by winning a seat in the Kentucky legislature and the hand of Susan Myers, daughter of the town's leading merchant. He bought a three-story brick house with sixteen large rooms, big halls and a copious cellar—a place that impressed young George, when he saw it some sixty years later, as designed for bountiful living and continuous entertaining. An ambitious man quick to use his money and his family connections for his own preferment, William Champe was six times a member of the state legislature, a member of the state constitutional convention of 1849,[9] once commonwealth's attorney for his district, mayor of Augusta and reputedly the Whig boss of Bracken County.[10] Before the Civil War broke out, he turned Democrat, and as such was elected to

the Augusta City Council the day after the firing on Fort Sumter. The Council voted to form and equip a home guard to enforce neutrality in the town, divided in its sympathies between North and South, and to defend it from outside attack.

In fact, Augusta was attacked in September 1862, as part of the duel for possession of Kentucky. Confederate General Edmund Kirby Smith detailed Colonel Basil Duke, a distant relative of the Marshalls, with a detachment of 450 cavalry and a light artillery company, to break up a reported concentration of Federal troops at Augusta and then ford the river to threaten Cincinnati.[11]

The two oldest of William Champe Marshall's three grown sons were by then away serving with the Confederate Army. The youngest, George Catlett, was sixteen and along with his father was enrolled in the Augusta Home Guard, a force of about one hundred men commanded by Dr. Joshua Bradford, a distinguished surgeon of the town who had served with the Union Army during the battle of Shiloh.[12]

When Colonel Duke and his men reached a little hill south of Augusta early in the morning of September 27, they observed two small Federal gunboats tied up at the wharf, each with a twelve-pounder aboard. Duke emplaced his howitzers on the high ground and dispatched some men into the town with orders to fire on the boats. Dr. Bradford came down to the wharf with the word that the "rebels are coming" and urged the captain of one of the gunboats to open fire. But neither he nor William Champe Marshall, who joined him by the river, was able to prevail on the "Navy" to take any action until a Confederate shell struck one of the boats. Then both boats cast off and moved across the river, firing three random shots in the direction of the attackers as they departed.

Duke, who had feared the naval cannon as much as Bradford depended on them, decided to move in as soon as he saw the gunboats withdraw. Without artillery to oppose the enemy's superior force, Bradford had no choice but surrender. He raised a white flag from an upstairs window as soon as Duke's men came down the Main Street, but the Home Guard, scattered in various houses, did not see it and began shooting at the invaders at close range. The Confederate commander then turned his cannon on

houses from which the shots came and set fire to several. In the brief but wild melee which followed, twenty-one of Duke's men lost their lives and eighteen were wounded, as against seven of the defenders killed and fifteen wounded. In less than twenty minutes it was over and Bradford's surrender was accepted, though Duke had difficulty in persuading his angry men not to kill them all. The little battle had proved so costly that Duke abandoned his plans to cross the river and pulled back, calling his day in Augusta "the gloomiest and saddest that any among us had ever had."

Among the hundred prisoners that Duke took from Augusta was George Catlett Marshall. He was paroled shortly, possibly because, as legend has it, Duke had taken him only as surety for the lives of several of his wounded whom he left for Mrs. William Marshall to nurse back to health. It was George Catlett's first and last taste of war. Prohibited by the terms of his parole from fighting again, he entered Augusta College shortly before the end of the war. Yet his short service in the Union cause may not have been altogether insignificant from his own point of view. His commanding officer in that engagement, Dr. Joshua Bradford, was not only the first citizen of Augusta but the uncle of the girl George Catlett was to marry. In Augusta at that time Bradfords and Marshalls did not ordinarily mix, perhaps for personal but more obviously for political reasons: both Dr. Joshua and his physician brother, Jonathan, were vigorous advocates of abolition,[13] whereas William Marshall had no record of devotion to the Union except his possibly reluctant participation in the battle of Augusta. The day of the battle, according to family lore, was one of the very few occasions on which the Bradford brothers and William Marshall spoke to each other, and the estrangement of the two families continued after the war. Still, despite Marshall's impression of a kind of Montague-Capulet feud, George Catlett did succeed in marrying Laura Emily, the daughter of Dr. Jonathan Bradford, and his sister, Margaret, married Laura's brother, Thomas.

Augusta had been good to William Champe Marshall but by the sixties steamboat travel was losing out to the railroads and the

once-flourishing river port's decline was clearly marked. George Catlett apparently tried his hand at business there, but by 1869 he was discouraged by his prospects. While visiting his sister Elizabeth, who had married a Union colonel, John Ewing, and was living near Pittsburgh, he heard of an opening as a clerk in an iron works in Dunbar, a little town on the Youghiogheny River at the western edge of the Alleghenies. He applied and was hired.

The year George Catlett Marshall got his first job was the year the golden spike was driven near Ogden, Utah, completing the first trans-continental railroad. It was also the year that the Knights of Labor were organized, though that fact and its portent of industrial wars to come were concealed from most contemporary eyes. It was the year that General Ulysses S. Grant was first inaugurated President, and his administration embarked on a course of boodle and bathos that ushered in a generation of stagnancy in political leadership and political imagination. Stimulated by the war, and now faced with huge pent-up consumer demand, Northern industry was already in the midst of reckless expansion. Inflation made the wheels spin faster, and would also contribute to the severity of the collapse just ahead in 1873. The application of corporate organization first to railroads and then to industry showed the way to pyramid capital and created a whole new kind of business. The 1860s and the 1870s were the watershed years between the traditional economy of individually owned enterprises and the modern society of huge, impersonal economic organizations. Fresh tides of immigration, in which the Irish and Germans continued dominant until the 1880s, assured an abundant, cheap, and—for a while—docile supply of labor. Nature yielded whatever else was needed: coal, iron, oil, from Pennsylvania; iron from Michigan; lead, silver, copper, gold, from the West (the great Comstock lode had been tapped just before the war).

It was a time to become rich. Four famous fortunes were even then being founded on the natural wealth of Pennsylvania alone. In 1870 John D. Rockefeller incorporated the Standard Oil Company of Ohio, fed initially by the wells of Pennsylvania. In 1871 Henry Clay Frick, a clerk in a distillery, borrowed ten thousand

dollars to buy fifty coke ovens and three hundred acres of land in the area of the great Connellsville vein of bituminous coal. This, it turned out, was the down payment on a vast coal and steel empire. His future associate, Andrew Carnegie, already a millionaire, established the J. Edgar Thomson Steel Works in Pittsburgh in 1875. The fourth of the tycoons, Andrew Mellon, was born to fortune, the son of the Pittsburgh banker who lent Frick his stake.

George Catlett Marshall took the crest of this breaking wave of industrialism with similar assurance, at least at the start. In partnership with the young bookkeeper at the Dunbar Iron Company, Arthur Weir Bliss from Alabama, he began manufacturing brick for coking ovens, the beehives in which the coal was roasted; forty such ovens had been built in Dunbar in 1869. By August of 1872 Bliss, Marshall and Company was producing seven thousand brick a day—the beginning of a solid business with wealth perhaps ahead.[14]

Marshall, well pleased, went back to Augusta in the spring of 1873 to marry Laura Bradford, to whom he had been engaged for four years. At the wedding on April 30 at Dr. Jonathan Bradford's house supper and dancing followed the ceremony; the correspondent for the Cincinnati *Times and Chronicle* found that "the 'poetry of motion' was exemplified as dainty feet tripped lightly on the linened floor. . . ." The bride played some tunes on the piano and "about two o'clock, May-day morning, the crowd began to disperse, well-pleased with the night's entertainment." [15]

For Laura the move to Western Pennsylvania was a return to familiar country. Her mother's father, James Peyton Stuart, had moved from Alexandria, Virginia, to Pittsburgh in the 1830s and had become president of the old Liberty Bank of Pittsburgh, and she had aunts living in Pittsburgh whom she visited often.[16] In February 1874 her first son was born at Augusta, Kentucky, where she had gone to be with her parents. Named William Champe for his grandfather, the child lived only six months and in the summer of 1874 was buried in Augusta. A second son, Stuart Bradford, was born near Washington, Pennsylvania, in February 1875, and a daughter, Marie, in December 1876.

Shortly after the birth of their first child the Marshalls moved from Dunbar eight miles south to Uniontown, the county seat of Fayette County, which was to be the family home so long as George Catlett lived. They spent part of their first year there as guests, or boarders, with the Gilmores, one of the old Uniontown families. In 1875 they rented from A. W. Boyd a solid, two-story brick house at 130 West Main Street next to the Gilmores'. In this house the last of the family, George Catlett Marshall, Jr., was born on December 31, 1880.[17]

George Catlett's business fortunes had fluctuated during his first five years of marriage. In 1873, Marshall and Bliss had leased the coal works of Thomas Frost and announced plans to sell lump coal and to build additional coking ovens. But 1873 was the first year of the first of the great depressions,[18] caused largely by the overbuilding of the railroads with an accompanying inflation of credit, and the Connellsville region was hit hard by the precipitate fall-off in the demand for iron and for coke to make it.

It is likely that the young partners had difficulties in holding on through the first year, but by 1874 they were able to acquire additional property in Dunbar. By 1875, the large backlog of pig iron began to disappear and demands for new production began to mount so that the year saw a slightly larger output by the iron furnaces than had the boom year 1871. Affected favorably by this upsurge in the iron business, Bliss, Marshall and Company built eighty-nine ovens in 1876 and was reported to be "running full force." When full prosperity returned to the country in 1879, Fayette County coke prices leaped from under a dollar a ton to five dollars. Three-fifths of the latter price represented clear profit.[19] Marshall and Bliss now took in other partners and incorporated as the Percy Mining Company, of which Marshall eventually became president. While they continued to make brick, their main business became the manufacture of coke. In 1880 they organized the Fayette Coke and Furnace Company which purchased the Oliphant furnace and eventually built there 150 ovens. They also bought coal lands.[20]

Marshall and his partners were among the larger coke manufacturers in the region, in the eighteen-eighties, but they were a long way from being the biggest. Henry Clay Frick, having

greater resources of capital, had not only survived but had used the depression to buy out competitors, and by 1882 H. C. Frick and Company owned 1000 ovens and 3000 acres of coal—about one-eighth of the region's production at that time. In that year Frick joined with Carnegie, incorporated with two million dollars' capitalization and began the inexorable march to monopoly.[21]

In history the last decades of the nineteenth century were a time of tremendous, immoderate innovation, economic, social, political, artistic. But to the boy born on that last day of 1880 it seemed when he looked back that he had come rather at the end of an era, that his boyhood in fact was lived in an antiquity more remote, less easily recoverable, than most boyhoods. In some sense that impression, too, was just.

Not only are conclusions in the historical flow distinguished from the beginnings only by a point of view, but a child is born into the lap of the past—at least as much of the past as is represented by the life span of his parents. He is also set down in a community that inhabits buildings as well as traditions normally a generation or more old. George Catlett and Laura were of the vintage of the Civil War. While they themselves were making their way as rapidly as they could into the new industrial world of postwar America, they carried into that world the manners and morals of their prewar youth. General Marshall, remembering his own youth from the vantage point of the mid-twentieth century, was contrasting in part the attitudes and ways of life of generations one hundred years apart. And what a hundred years! From Appomattox to Hiroshima, from the transcontinental railroad to satellites in orbit, from a nation of fifty million provincials, mostly farmers, to an industrial superpower of a hundred and eighty million whose every move sends tremors of consequence into what used to be called the far corners of the earth.

It was, broadly speaking, the Civil War itself that ended one era and began another. But the break was not made cleanly. Out of the war the nation emerged triumphant over the smaller and divisive jealousies of its parts. Northern finance capitalism won the American future from Southern agrarian feudalism; manu-

facturing replaced farming as the nation's primary economic concern; cities were fated to grow, villages to decline; a free society, having turned its back on slavery, was to struggle to create an egalitarian democracy that would recall the Southern experiment in landed aristocracy only as literary romance. But this whole accounting due the victors was not rendered at Appomattox and would not be settled for generations. The defeated South resisted the attitudes of surrender, as well as a good part of the reality. The West, for many years after the war, was still absorbed essentially in the problems of settling the wilderness and even more acutely than ever in the problem of the Indian. The same year (1876) that saw the invention of the telephone and brought thousands of Americans to the Philadelphia centennial to admire the modern city and the triumph of the machine also witnessed the slaughter of General Custer's army at the Little Big Horn.

To talk of the urbanizing and industrializing of the United States after the war is to describe a tide rising in the East as though it were already national because in fact it became so. Before that tide was full, however, the old dry land of rural America behind dikes of tradition put up a sturdy defense of old ways and old values. In 1880 rural America still flourished outwardly even though, like those green fields around Uniontown which were underlain by coal, it had already a mortal vulnerability to progress.

For George Marshall the old ways were embodied in Augusta, Kentucky. The boy's visits to his parents' birthplace were infrequent, but in a literal sense Augusta and Uniontown were poles of his young world. Already a place grown old and nostalgic when he first saw it, Augusta—unlike Uniontown—has not changed much since. The town, less than ten streets wide, stretches along the Ohio River at the foot of a high hill.[22] A ferry still plies between the sparsely settled, wooded river banks, reminiscent of stretches of the Rhine. For the boy the chief differences between Uniontown and Augusta may have been between native haunts and a museum of cousins in which it was forbidden to roughhouse or stick out your tongue; but there would come a time when he recognized Augusta as the representative of something enduring, Uniontown as the symbol of change.

Uniontown was actually a few years older. Its first town lots were laid out in July 1776, making it by the standards of the American West an ancient settlement. A waystop on the old National Road across the Alleghenies, it had been cut off when the railroads drove out stagecoaches, just as Augusta had been when steamboat travel on the Ohio declined. But Uniontown was not destroyed because under it lay that great vein of coal for which the railroad age developed an enormous demand. If Augusta was a window on the past, Uniontown was a door to the twentieth century. The western counties of Pennsylvania lay squarely and imminently in the path of change.

Yet even while coal miners tore up the farmlands; even while immigrants (first the Irish and then the Hungarians) came in thousands to work the mines, bake the coke, and disrupt the more or less comfortable homogeneous pattern of native-born, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant communities; even while the cities grew and the countryside shrank and blackened—still the old inhabitants were not at once jarred out of their rural isolation, still less out of their rural habits of mind. Uniontown's citizens were still largely of the English and Scotch-Irish stock which had populated most of the area. This was Whisky Rebellion country, strongly Jeffersonian and Jacksonian in politics until the Civil War, and it continued to poll a large Democratic vote until the McKinley-Bryan campaign.[23] The pioneer, individualist tradition remained strong and was echoed throughout Marshall's youth in the impassioned editorials in the local Democratic paper, *The Genius of Liberty,* to which the Marshalls subscribed. It was a culture that had a strong bias for the frontier virtues of hard work and self-reliance.

As though to mark his position at the cusp of an age, the house on West Main Street in which George Marshall lived all his boyhood was at the very edge of Uniontown, the last house on the west before Main Street crossed an ornamental stone bridge over one of the Monongahela's lesser tributaries, then called locally Coal Lick Run. Coal Lick Run curled around the Marshall back yard, dividing in one place around an island orchard consisting of four large apple trees. Then it flowed north into fertile fields, which in the boy's concentric geography were known as first, sec-

ond, and third hollows as they receded from his home. To the east the city clustered, counting thirty-five hundred inhabitants in the year of Marshall's birth. Although expanding rapidly, it remained small enough for a few years to be encompassed as a kind of family domain by a small boy who "knew about everybody in town" and walked everywhere. Only after he went away to school did the town spill westward across Coal Lick Run and "buried my childhood under twenty feet of fill."

Visiting Uniontown today one may feel something of the General's sense of loss. Of the happy, green years of the 1880s there is not a trace remaining. Where 130 West Main Street stood, big, comfortable, ugly, and serene, now stands a glaring white, oblong, concrete building with neon signs in front proclaiming it the home of the VFW. Next door is a Texaco filling station built on the twenty-foot fill that covers the old slope down to the stream. Asphalt and grime pave the Marshalls' back yard. The orchard can no longer even be imagined. Coal Lick Run flows thin and milky under a railroad trestle, along a station yard, through urban wastelands that have expropriated the green hollows of youth. West on the hill that was the Gilmore place rise a multi-level yellow brick motel and rows of ordinary houses, neither new nor old.

Across Main Street (which is the old National Road) there is now another filling station. It uses a piece of a red brick house which in George Marshall's time was the home of his closest friend, Andrew (Andy) Thompson. Andy's father was J. V. Thompson, banker, who in time became wealthy. But as long as the Thompsons lived in that house across the road it was known as "Miss Minnie Redburn's place." For George and Andy their two houses and yards, separated by the Pike but joined by the same stream, were one realm. Stretched by a boy's imagination, it was big enough and wild enough to grow in.

There is a special irony in the fact that the west end in which George and Andy played has now been pre-empted by no less than three gas stations. Of all the destroyers of nineteenth-century rural life, the most ruthlessly effective has been the automobile. The General remembered with particular wonderment the very small size of his childhood realm. He thought it hardly

extended in any direction more than five miles from his home. It is true that often in the summers the family boarded up in the mountains, usually on Chestnut Ridge, the closest of the Alleghenies. Once he recalled having gone with his mother to Pittsburgh to shop. There were besides, of course, the trips to Augusta and a visit to Virginia when he was ten. Yet despite these excursions, the country he knew well and considered home was only as much of the environs of Uniontown as he could visit on foot.

The United States in the history books appears always on the move, and our national story can almost be told in terms of migrations, large and small. Yet while the nation was thus grandly mobile, the individual for the most part was not. He might pick up his home and move it many hundreds of miles, but when he set it down again he stayed close by. In George's boyhood the streetcar came to Uniontown. But the biggest event here, and indeed throughout most of rural America, was the coming of the bicycle —the kind introduced in 1884 with two equal-sized wheels that could be mounted without ladders and ridden without acrobatic training. The bicycle—a million of them in use by 1893—effected on a small scale the sort of social revolution that the automobile was to carry out on such a colossal scale in succeeding generations.

To return to George Marshall's youth, this double revolution in mobility must in imagination be unmade. One must burrow under the filling station by Coal Lick Run and find not just a rural idyl of carefree lads at play but a representative corner of an America that once seemed perfectly secure and has now vanished, leaving hardly a trace.